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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001155

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2015
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR ON POLITICAL REFORM,
CAMEL JOCKEYS (CORRECTED COPY)

REF: ABU DHABI 1002

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Minister for Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan told Ambassador March 12 that Abu Dhabi will begin consultations with leaders in the western part of the emirate about broadening political participation through representative municipal councils. When the Ambassador urged rapid UAEG action to enforce the existing ban on the use of trafficked underage camel jockeys, Sheikh Mansour said that President Khalifa viewed the trafficking issue as an embarrassment to the UAE, and that both the UAE Interior and Labor ministers had promised to have a law in place by April. However, Sheikh Mansour said it would be difficult to end the controversial practice by the time of the season-ending camel race at Al Wathba Camel Racetrack (just outside the capital) in two weeks. End Summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador opened the meeting by commenting on the initiatives being undertaken by the new UAE Cabinet in the four months since President Khalifa took office, including a plan to inject \$405 million worth of infrastructure improvements into the northern emirates. Sheikh Mansour said the president would be visiting the northern emirates in about two weeks, his first official visit there since taking over from his father.

Broadening Political Representation

13. (C) In light of public discussion about the creation of municipal councils in Sharjah and Ajman emirates, and the possibility of future elections to the Sharjah councils (reftel), the Ambassador asked Sheikh Mansour for his views about the pace of broadening political representation elsewhere in the UAE. &We, re working on that,8 Mansour replied. He said Abu Dhabi Executive Council member Khaldoon

bin Mubarak would be Abu Dhabi emirate,s point person responsible for discussing this issue with local leaders and tribes. &We will start with the western area8 of Abu Dhabi emirate, Mansour explained, ticking off the towns of Ruwais, Mirfa, and Medina Zayed. He said that he had talked to his brother, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ), about whether to announce this publicly, and that MbZ had agreed to do so. &We will announce something soon,8 Mansour said, although he quickly clarified that he meant more than a few weeks. &We have to do it in a good way for our people,8 and that will require (civic) education, he added.

¶4. (C) Sheikh Mansour said the concept of representational government (he did not use the word elections) would be introduced emirate-by-emirate, and the effort would be &cooperative.8 Ambassador asked whether it would extend to the Federal National Council, whose members are appointed at present by the rulers of each emirate. Mansour said the UAE would start with the municipal councils.

Trafficking in Camel Jockeys

¶5. (C) The Ambassador then raised the camel jockey issue with Mansour, saying that trafficking in persons had been discussed during the course of FTA deliberations March 8-10 with Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid (MbR), Minister of Economy Sheikh Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of Information Sheikh Abdullah, and Finance MinState Kharbash. The Ambassador then showed Mansour a copy of the March 10 sports section from Arabic daily &Al Bayan8 that carried an article and photographs of the March 9 Nad Al Sheba camel race in Dubai. Photos showed MbR and his older brother, Finance Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid, watching the races from their vehicles. When the Ambassador pointed to the photo depicting very young jockeys racing at the event, Mansour replied, &I agree with you 100 percent. It,s not some of them; it,s all of them8 who were under-age. (Note: President Khalifa, Sheikh Mansour, and other Abu Dhabi leaders had attended MbR,s luncheon at Nad Al Sheba, but had skipped the actual race.)

¶6. (C) Mansour proceeded to describe what actions the UAEG would be taking in the near future to address the TIP issue. He said that Interior Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed and Labor Minister Dr. Ali Al Ka,abi had &promised us a law8 banning the use of children as camel jockeys. The new law, which would enforce an existing ban on trafficked camel jockeys, would be in place by April. (Comment: This is what we have heard repeatedly from these same officials in earlier meetings. We have not seen the draft legislation. End comment.) Sheikh Mansour said that President Khalifa had spoken to Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, Deputy Prime Minister and facto Foreign Minister (and UAE Camel Racing Federation chairman) and instructed him not to allow these children to enter the country. &It is embarrassing for our government,8 Mansour said.

¶7. (C) While Sheikh Mansour pledged that the new law would be in place in a matter of three to four weeks, he said that he could not promise the Ambassador that the UAEG could take action to stop the practice of using under-age children as camel jockeys by the time of the season-ending race that will be held in two weeks at the Al Wathba Camel Racetrack a few miles outside the capital. &That would be a very hard job,8 he said, referring to the difficulty of enforcing the existing camel jockey ban without a law on the books.

¶8. (C) The Ambassador noted that with all the positive developments in the U.S.-UAE relationship, the camel jockey issue remained &a large ink blot on the UAE,s white page of progress.8 She underscored the importance of the UAEG enacting and enforcing the draft law banning the trafficking and exploitation of minors for sport, and urged UAEG action on repatriations/reintegration of boys trafficked for this purpose.

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